

Companies Required to Use Best Available Technologies and Have Recovery Plans

Washington, DC - Congressman John Hall (NY-19) introduced (H.R. 5868), the Safe Drill Act of 2010 yesterday, which requires oil companies to use the best available technology, such as acoustic sensors, for drilling and have an oil spill recovery plan in place before being allowed to drill.

The April 20th explosion at BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig shows the need to revise federal regulatory requirements. The current safety measures to prevent large scale oil leaks failed, with disastrous consequences.

"Requiring companies to use the best technology available, such as acoustic sensors, and have a plan in place before a disaster happens is a simple protection from a potentially complex problem," said Rep. Hall. "Recent events have made it clear that some corporations are more concerned about their bottom line than they are about doing their business safely and avoiding harmful events. The cost of using state of the art technology is much less than the cost of the cleanup and tragic loss of life."

Congressman Hall's bill applies to new drilling leases and existing leases for sites that are already in operation. Companies applying for new leases must certify they are using the best available technology and present a cleanup plan with their new applications.

Current leaseholders will have to certify they have a comprehensive plan to respond to a spill and contain and cleanup the oil and are using the best available technology. If this certification is not met within six months, the U.S. Department of the Interior will have the ability to require leaseholders suspend operations. After eighteen months, the lease will be canceled.

The bill would also require the Department of the Interior to review blowout preventers, emergency shutoff systems, and other emerging technology every three years in order to determine the best available technology.

Congressman Hall, an outspoken leader on the environment, questioned President of BP America, Lamar McKay at a May hearing in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Hearing documents indicate that acoustic sensors like that required by Norway and Canada cost approximately \$500,000 compared to the billions of dollars in damage caused by the spill. Acoustic sensors were not used in the Gulf because they were not required.